

DSE

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and air breathers (fixed wing aircraft and helicopters), said Don Graziano, McGregor Range Air Controller, N.M., U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery.

"We value their availability on short notice, phenomenal support, and ability to carry our instrumentation clearances," said Graziano. "Tens of millions of dollars have been saved in terms of paperwork, man hours and clearances since inception of the (DSE) program. Can't say enough about the TACOS.

Students of the Army Captains Career Course from Ft. Bliss, Texas have begun to make regular visits to the 150th Fighter Wing each year because the DSE mission is critical to the training and development of the Army's most significant air defense systems, said Capt. Samuel Morgan, Air Defense Small Group Instructor, Air Defense Artillery School, Ft. Bliss.

"We love coming up here because DSE is familiar with the same Army missile defense systems that the officers of the Captains Career Course are," said Morgan. "The tours are invaluable in understanding the link between the DSE mission and the Army's Air Missile Defense community."

DSE was an Air Force program until 1971 when the USAF asked the New Mexico Air National Guard to take over the program, said Robinson. Around for more than 30 years, DSE has provided genuinely unique support to the U.S. Department of Defense, and provided countless hours to flight test communities around the world. In addition to the support of Army air defense systems, the DSE branch has been successful in supporting a wide variety of programs, to include the certification of Navy AEGIS cruisers,

(high-powered missiles and radar), and advancements of the USAF F/A-22 Raptor."

"Nobody else is doing it, nobody else can do it as inexpensively as we can, and no one else can support it the way we can," said Lt Col Ronald R. King, DSE mission commander for the 150th Operations Group.

"Our goal is to become federally recognized as an official test support squadron," said King. We've flown high performance aircraft in direct support of operational and developmental tests for the joint services and Department of Defense since 1971. We wouldn't have been around since then if we weren't successful.

Added to the DSE program's credit is their commitment to fly alongside each F/A-22 as it comes off the production line, according to King. And is what the Tacos are currently doing.

"The F/A-22 Raptor is a Lockheed Martin-Boeing program, commissioned by the Air Force twelve years ago," said Greg Caires, F/A-22 Raptor program communications and public relations manager for Lockheed Martin. A replacement for some of the Air Force's aging fighters, the Raptor is faster and more agile than any fighter the Air Force has today.

"We've been doing the flight test support for the F/A-22 program since 1995," said Maj. Benjamin H. Breslin, DSE pilot for the 150th. "We began flying profiles in the every early stages of the F/A-22's development. Earlier this spring, we flew our F-16s on a maiden voyage with the first production model."

For Lockheed, the first battle has been to get each plane tested before delivery to the Air Force. The New

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DSE Element

A unit F-16" Fighting Falcon" deploying a CMTT copy of a cruise missile tow target. The tow line is released anywhere from 1,000 feet to a half mile. Performance testing is then done on the target by 150th Fighter Wing DSE pilots in other F-16s serving as "chase" planes. Flight characteristics of the tow target are observed, recorded and often video taped.



Photos by Tony Still